

PR00131-2147

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

September 27, 1980

Dist to: Dear Ed:

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RF(1eb)

I have received your letter of September 19 regarding the current absence of a qualified Russian speaker at our Embassy in Kabul. We are indeed alert to the desirability of the presence of a Russian speaker on the American Embassy staff, although our first priority remains the assignment of officers proficient in Dari, the language of the host country.

Ambassador Dubs, our late Chief of Mission, was an expert on Soviet matters and spoke Russian with virtual fluency. Mr. and Mrs. James Taylor (he is a Foreign Service officer, she an ICA officer) were transferred from Kabul after three and one-half years in the spring of 1980. Both officers speak excellent Russian. Thus, our past record of maintaining Russian language proficiency in Afghanistan is a good one and reflects a longstanding tradition. We have not been able to reassign one of our Russian speaking officers in the intervening few months. Moreover, since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan nine months ago and the ensuing crisis, we have severely reduced the size of our staff to a total of twenty people in view of the deteriorating security situation.

The Department of State, as you are no doubt aware, maintains a language designated position (LDP) program to ensure that we have qualified language officers in key positions world-wide. We believe this to be a rational, effective system and in over 1,300 instances we have concluded that a professional-level knowledge of the

The Honorable
Edward J. Derwinski,
House of Representatives.

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language is essential for job performance. The two LDPs in Kabul are both for Dari and I am pleased to report that we have at least three able Dari speakers at the post, i.e., every substantive reporting officer is language qualified.

The Department intends to undertake on an urgent basis the reassignment of a qualified Russian speaker to our Embassy in Kabul and the related issue of establishing a language designated position in Russian at the post.

Sincerely,



David D. Newsom

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